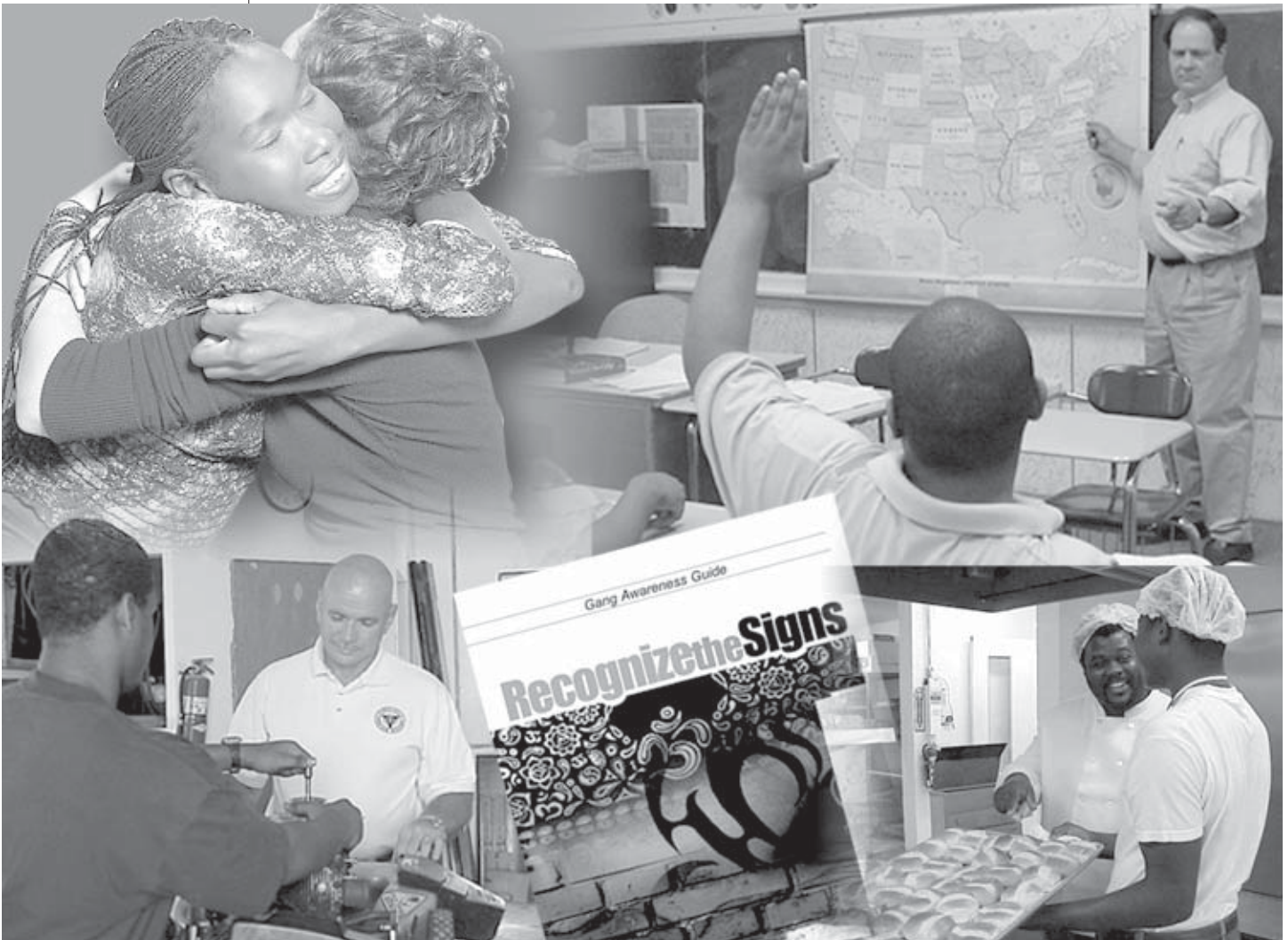


# Juvenile Justice Commission

Created by statute in 1995, the Juvenile Justice Commission is responsible for the care, custody and post-custodial supervision of juveniles committed to the agency by the courts. In a broader sense, the mission of the JJC is to foster public safety and reduce juvenile delinquency by holding young people accountable for their lawbreaking, providing them opportunities to grow and achieve positive change, and to promote their return to the community as productive, law-abiding citizens.



## Significant Initiatives

### Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI)—

Through its selection by the nationally-renowned Annie E. Casey Foundation as a model site for the foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), the JJC has significantly reduced the number of young offenders inappropriately confined in secure detention. Launched in 2004 as a pilot effort through a \$200,000 Casey Foundation grant, the JDAI was initially implemented in Atlantic, Camden, Essex and Monmouth counties. Soon afterward, Hudson County also implemented JDAI. The initiative has since been expanded to include Mercer and Union counties. By the end of 2007, a JDAI program is expected to be functioning in all 17 New Jersey counties that operate juvenile detention facilities.

JDAI ensures that youth who are considered a public safety risk or a risk of flight are detained. JDAI also provides detention alternatives — for example, electronic monitoring, in-home detention, shelter care/host homes, and evening reporting centers — for youth that are not a public safety risk.

JDAI has generated encouraging results. It has helped to address public safety needs while placing select juveniles in alternative settings that are more appropriate to their individual needs and circumstances. As a result of the initiative, on any given day in 2006, there were 215 fewer youth in detention centers compared to the number in 2003, representing a decrease of more than 43 percent. (The actual numbers are as follows: 284 youth in 2006, compared to 499 youth in 2003.)

While the JDAI effort is spearheaded by the JJC, it is founded on a collaborative approach involving stakeholders from the community, from various levels of law enforcement, and from the human services, juvenile justice and judicial arenas.

The success of JDAI in New Jersey was featured in the July 2006 issue of the Casey Foundation's nationally-read *JDAI Newsletter*. The JDAI continues to be supported through grants from the Baltimore-based Casey Foundation, and from the Governor's Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Committee.

### Expansion of PHOENIX Gang Intervention/Prevention Curriculum—

Developed with the mindset that gang involvement is an adolescent addiction, the PHOENIX Gang Intervention/Prevention Curriculum deals with the social and psychological issues underlying the addiction. In 2006, the JJC expanded the PHOENIX curriculum beyond JJC walls by collaborating with educators in the Newark, Trenton and Camden public school districts and training them in the program. In Camden, educators finished their PHOENIX-related training in September 2006, and books developed to support the curriculum were delivered in December. Ultimately, plans are to have the PHOENIX curriculum taught in 24 Camden city schools. Educators in Newark completed their PHOENIX training in November 2006 and, as of the first week of December, had begun teaching the PHOENIX curriculum to students in two elementary schools identified as the district's most gang-involved. Eventually, plans are to have the PHOENIX curriculum delivered in 54 Newark schools. In Trenton, educators completed their PHOENIX-related training in September 2006, and received the curriculum-based textbooks as of December. Ultimately, PHOENIX is expected to be taught in 21 Trenton schools.



### Transition of Life Skills & Leadership Academy/ Project USE—

In 2006, the JJC launched a plan to convert its Life Skills & Leadership Academy – historically a “boot camp” style program for young offenders moving toward parole – to use as a minimum security residential home for juveniles. As part of the initiative, the JJC’s Edison Prep Residential Community Home in Trenton was targeted for relocation to the former Life Skills and Leadership Academy site in Tabernacle, Burlington County. Edison Prep was established in 1991 as a partnership between the JJC and Project USE (Urban, Suburban Environments). The move from Trenton to the sprawling Tabernacle site was expected to enable Edison Prep, its partner Project USE, and the JJC to pioneer new and innovative programs in 2007 that would address the educational, social, therapeutic and recreational needs of young offenders. Specifically, the move was expected to increase the number of juveniles that could be housed in the Edison Prep/ Project USE program from 24 to 50, and to afford those 50 residents a chance to take part in experiences not previously available to them. The move of the Edison Prep/Project USE program to Tabernacle was expected to vacate the facility known as the Florence Crittenton House in Trenton. Phase three of the transition effort was scheduled to involve refurbishing of the Crittenton building to allow for the housing, beginning in 2007, of 24 young people in a transitional living arrangement. Those assigned to the Crittenton facility are young people preparing to return to their home communities, and have earned placement in the program. Under the program, JJC residents 18 or older participate in work initiatives run through a cooperative venture between JJC and the state Department of Treasury. For example, Treasury employs 11 young men trained at the State warehouse in Hamilton. Under this initia-

tive, young offenders are employed six hours each day working as furniture restorers, computer technicians and general warehouse helpers. The JJC participants are paid a regular wage, and will ultimately receive a certificate outlining the skills they learned in order to help them obtain future employment. The goal is to help young people who have made wrong choices turn the corner, and take real steps toward positive change

### Suicide Prevention Initiative—

The JJC continued its efforts in 2006 to eliminate juvenile suicides in 2006 through development of the Suicide Prevention Handbook for Juvenile Justice Commission Facilities and Programs. The handbook incorporates recommended “best practices” and National Commission on Correctional Health Care standards for such critical issues as staff training, communication, intervention and housing and supervision of juveniles.

### Prison Rape Elimination Act—

In 2006, the JJC partnered with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to implement public law 108-79, otherwise known as the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). Signed into law by the President in 2003, the federal legislation seeks to analyze and eradicate the prison rape problem in all juvenile and adult facilities. Working closely with the National Institute of Corrections and OJJDP, the Juvenile Justice Commission has appointed a compliance monitor to ensure its compliance with the law by inspecting facilities on a regular basis and by coordinating PREA-related awareness events. A multi-disciplinary group consisting of representatives from the JJC, numerous law enforcement agencies, child service agencies and others convened to discuss implementation of PREA.

## Juvenile Reentry Programs

The year 2006 was a busy and exciting one for the JJC's Juvenile Parole and Transitional Services (JPATS) unit, the unit responsible for overseeing reentry of juveniles to the community at large. Many challenges confront young people returning home following their commitment to the JJC. The JPATS unit is dedicated to working collaboratively with family members and community stakeholders to ensure that juveniles who are returning home have an opportunity to learn and grow, and to become productive, law-abiding citizens.

### Governor's Office Reentry Collaboration—

The JJC remained involved throughout 2006 in a collaborative reentry effort between the Governor's Office, the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, the Department of Corrections and the New Jersey State Parole Board focused on reentry issues confronting both juvenile offenders and adult prisoners.

### Juvenile Justice Reentry Initiative (JJRI)/Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative—

The U.S. Department of Justice's Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative has provided funding for two model sites – Camden and Essex counties. In both locations, the JJRI secures post-release services for juvenile parolees who have been identified as serious and violent offenders — many of them involved with gangs, drugs and/or crimes involving drugs. In 2006, the JJRI Camden project continued to be a major focus of the Attorney General's Safer Cities Project in the city of Camden. In Essex County, the project continued in 2006 to be the product of collaborative effort involving the Police Institute of Rutgers University, the Essex County Youth Service Commission, Essex County Probation, local law enforcement and local social service agencies.

### Project Safe Neighborhood—

Project Safe Neighborhood involves a partnership between the JJC and the Mercer and Passaic vicinage probation offices, the Trenton and Paterson police departments and the Division of Criminal Justice. The various partners supervise high-risk probationers and parolees at their homes during “non-traditional” hours to ensure compliance with the conditions of parole and probation. The goal of the initiative is to reduce juvenile offenders' involvement with guns, drugs and street gangs.

### Rubino Academy—

Residents of the JJC's Edison Prep Residential Community Home enrolled in the Rubino Academy while still attending Edison Prep. The Rubino Academy, an alternative school located at Mercer County Community College, provides juveniles with exposure to college life. Residents continue their enrollment at the Rubino Academy upon release to parole and work toward enrollment in Mercer County Community College.

